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SUBJECT: DECENTRALIZATION UNITES THE UNITED FRONT

¶1. (SBU) Mustafa Zahir, grandson of deceased King Zahir Shah and aspiring United Front presidential candidate, recently shared with us a stump speech he drafted, which proposes replacing the current highly centralized state, organized around a strong presidency, with a decentralized governmental structure that vests ultimate authority in a greatly empowered parliament (See par 4 below for text.). Though Zahir's speech outlines a staged, protracted transition to "parliamentary democracy" and attempts to cloak its radical purpose with several references to "amendments" to the constitution, he is advocating nothing less than abandonment of the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan.

¶2. (SBU) United Front co-founder Mohammad Yunus Qanuni's chief-of-staff, Haji Ibrahim, strongly supports Zahir's proposal. He praised it both for its goal of a decentralized government and for the perceived practicality of the prescribed transition from the current state structure. National Assembly MP and United Front supporter Shakar Kargar (Uzbek, Faryab) hedged. Though he strongly advocates decentralization of the state, he believes the international community would be reluctant to underwrite a new constitutional drafting exercise.

¶3. (SBU) The United Front is an ethnically disparate political bloc that may break apart long before the 2009 elections. It is searching for a compelling message around which its feud-prone leadership board can unite. Though Mustafa Zahir seems unlikely, at this stage, to become the bloc's presidential candidate, his rather lengthy articulation of a path to a decentralized governmental structure may begin to rally those Afghans who want to forestall forever a return to Pashtun hegemony.

¶4. (SBU) Begin Text of Mustafa Zahir's draft speech, which was received in English:

"Peace Initiative of Mostapha Zaher for Comprehensive Political Settlement of Afghan Conflict"

In the name of God, the merciful, the beneficent...

My Beloved Compatriot, Sisters and Brothers,

As we all know, about six years elapse since the Bonn Agreement, which was concluded by the representatives of different Afghan groups in Germany. The provisions of this Agreement raised great hopes and expectations amongst the Afghan people and the international community to end the war in Afghanistan, and to rebuild our country long ravaged by war and devastation. However, a sincere review of the developments since then clearly reveal that not only have those hopes and expectations remained immaterialized, but the political, the security, the social and the economic situations are further deteriorating throughout the country. Such a dangerous trend of developments, regrettably, show that violence and insurgency are on the rise; the confidence of the people at home and abroad for a peaceful tomorrow is falling apart; and the resolve of the international community to help us out in the rebuilding of our country is increasingly weakening.

I am sure we all understand well that the enumeration of specific factors responsible for such failures, or for this matter, finger pointing to this or that individual, institution, party or group, is quite unfavorable and counter-productive attitude in our culture of Afghan dialogue and interaction. I therefore, would like to knowingly avoid such a destructive attitude, and would rather invite your attention to the real issues -- the most crucial issues that really matters for the present and the future of our beloved homeland, for the region, and for the international community at large. Those vital issues are the key issues of durable peace and rebuilding in Afghanistan -- the issues that we need to address collectively and comprehensively, with a great sense of responsibility, a true spirit of patriotism and urgency, before it is too late. Otherwise, the increasing

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flames of the ongoing fire, God forbid, will not only engulf our country and the entire region, but it may easily lead to a catastrophic global crisis of an unprecedented nature and scale. I can not emphasize more here that it is high time to act peacefully and politically -- to act now -- and to act responsibly, in unison and collectively, before it is too late.

It is in view of these vital concerns and grave responsibilities that I with a great respect to the free will and supreme interests of the Afghan nation, with due attention to the precarious situation at home and the disturbing developments in our neighborhood, being mindful of the catastrophic impact that such a dangerous trend of developments could have on the further aggravation of the situation in Afghanistan and in the region, urge your immediate attention to a peace process that I have sought for a comprehensive, realistic and practical settlement of the ongoing Afghan conflict.

The peace process that I propose has several stages involving some peaceful, political, constitutional and Afghanistan-wide (nation-wide) inter-Afghan interactions. This process begins with the launching of a practical mechanism for the initiation of a truly inclusive and all-encompassing inter-Afghan dialogue and ends with the formation of a broad-based and fully representative government of national unity in Afghanistan -- a democratic and elected government that is seen as legitimate and acceptable to the Afghan people and credible by the international community, who are still ready and willing to help our people in achieving a durable peace and the rebuilding of our country. With all due respect to the Islamic, national and traditional values of the people of Afghanistan and those of the standard, modern and universal elements in conflict resolution, my proposed peace process for a comprehensive, peaceful and political settlement of the Afghan conflict, involves the following phases:

II. Alliance for Peace and Reconstruction of Afghanistan

Formation of an "Alliance for Peace and Reconstruction of Afghanistan" as a nation-wide mechanism for the launching of a truly inclusive and Afghanistan-wide inter-Afghan dialogue, encompassing all segments of Afghan society, the government, the opposition parties and groups, the armed or unarmed individuals and formations. The prime mission of this Alliance would be to secure a nation-wide understanding and consensus of the Afghan people, aimed at mobilizing their active support, in unison and harmony with the international community, towards peace and reconstruction of Afghanistan. This Alliance, composed of credible, effective and eminent representatives of the Afghan nation, including the local chieftains and elderly, religious scholars, tribal leaders, the crippled and handicaps, former Jihad commanders, nomads, refugees and intellectuals, shall then, in an atmosphere of full trust, Afghan-hood and close cooperation, formulate a comprehensive plan for the convocation of a well-organized Permanent Loya Jirga of the Afghan people, to lead our country during a transition period of recovery from war to peace and reconstruction, following the end of the mandate of the current Government. While drawing this plan of action, it would be very essential for the Alliance to discuss and agree upon the most vital issues that the Permanent Loya Jirga should address in its deliberations and decision making processes, including the necessary amendments to the Constitution of Afghanistan - - the kind of amendments that would allow the establishment of a parliamentary democracy in our homeland; the formation of a truly inclusive, fully representative and decentralized organs of governments at the central, provincial and local levels.

Once the Alliance, based upon the principals of a nation-wide (Afghanistan-wide) dialogue, reaches a full understanding and a consensus with regard to all of the vital issues highlighted above, then the plan for the convocation of a well-organized Permanent Loya Jirga of the Afghan people

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shall be launched as the second phase of my proposed peace process.

II. Convocation of a Permanent Loya Jirga

With all due respect to the results and conclusions of the inclusive and Afghanistan-wide inter-Afghan dialogue, to be produced in the form of a nation-wide consensus and as part of the first phase of my proposed peace process; with due respect to the Article 64 of the Constitution of Afghanistan, a truly representative and Permanent Loya Jirga of the Afghan people shall be convened to lead Afghanistan during a transition period of recovery from war to peace and the rebuilding of our country. This Permanent Loya Jirga shall freely discuss and decide upon the following major issues:

- 1) The need for the formation of Interim Institutions to govern Afghanistan after the end of the mandate of the current Government;
- 2) An orderly transfer of powers from the current legislative bodies of Afghanistan to a Permanent Loya Jirga of the Afghan people;
- 3) An orderly transfer of powers from the current Afghan Government to an Interim Government of National Unity;
- 4) The form, the composition and the mandate of the Interim Government, to lead Afghanistan until such time as a broad-based and fully representative government that shall be produced through free and fair elections, is established;
- 5) An orderly transfer of powers from the current judiciary bodies of the country to an Interim one;
- 6) Review of the current Constitution of Afghanistan and the need for its amendment, aimed at replacing the current presidential system with a parliamentary democracy, and the establishment of a truly representative and decentralized forms of governance, including, executive, legislative and judiciary bodies at the central, provincial and district levels;
- 7) Review of the physical, social and economic security of

the people in Afghanistan and the effective ways and means to address them;

8) The presence of the international community in Afghanistan, their form, their mission and their mandate in the country, including the UN, EU, ISAF, NATO, other Governmental, Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations, and seeking effective ways and means to coordinate their efforts towards peace and reconstruction of Afghanistan;

9) Review of comprehensive, alternative and rational solutions of short-term, medium-term and long-term nature that shall prevent Afghanistan from becoming an opium-based economy and a narco-state;

10) Review of the effective ways and means to live in peace and harmony with our neighbors in the region.

As already noted, the Permanent Loya Jirga of the Afghan people, upon its completion of a thorough and comprehensive review of the major issues highlighted above, and upon the successful accomplishment of the mandate of the Interim Government, shall then call for the holding of general and democratic elections in the country, to be supervised by the United Nations as the third and last stage of my proposed peace process.

III. Holding of General and Democratic Elections

With the full accomplishment of the tasks highlighted under the Phase I and the Phase II of my proposed peace process, the conditions shall be then ready for holding general, free and democratic elections in our beloved homeland. As a result of these elections, the people of Afghanistan, according to the provision of a new Constitution, shall vote for a parliamentary system; an inclusive form of legislative bodies; and a truly broad-based representative government capable of electing a new Head of State and a Prime Minister for the country -- a government that shall be capable of maintaining a nation-wide and durable peace and security in our homeland; and providing the required conditions for a

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swifter and steadier rebuilding of Afghanistan long ravaged by war. Likewise, no doubt that the constructive developments as such in Afghanistan will help the international community to succeed their human mission of rescuing our region and the world at large from the catastrophic menace of terror, war, devastation and drug that presently threaten the very survival of the humanity on a global scale.

My Beloved Compatriots,

The time dictates that we should move beyond the bitterness, the pettiness and the anger that has consumed our country for almost three decades now and that has posed a great danger to the regional and global peace and security. In order to put an end to politics that is about war, division and confrontation, and in order to reconcile for the sake of our children and those of the future generations of our globe, we need to think about forgiveness and inclusion rather than hatred and exclusion; we need to build a true coalition and alliance for peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

My sincere appeal to you is that my proposed peace process and thereby the formation of an inclusive and nation-wide (Afghanistan-wide) alliance will certainly allow the Afghan people to undergo a transition period of political, social and economic recovery, and to effect a smooth, a peaceful, a legitimate and a constitutional transformation from rivalry to reconciliation, from confrontation to cooperation, from war to peace, and from destruction to rebuilding in our beloved and pridful homeland. What we should focus on at this time is to draw lessons from our bitter past and to replace those bitter lessons with love brotherhood and social justice.

The realization in practice of my proposed peace process

shall allow our nation to develop a system of local self-governance, with democratically elected institutions of fully functioning and representative organs at all levels, including district, provincial and state levels, with strong bounds to the central government in a united and indivisible Afghanistan.

I firmly believe that this is how we shall finally overcome our bitter past and this is how we shall collectively meet the challenges that we face as a united and indivisible nation - - a nation to be at peace in itself and with its neighbors. This is how we shall meet the challenge of restoring peace in our country and the challenge of rebuilding Afghanistan.

Whilst success comes from God the Great, with maturity and resolve, with patience and perseverance, with the strong will of the Afghan people, and with the persistent help of the international community, we shall collectively and successfully meet the crucial challenges before us.

God Bless You, Dear Compatriots

Your Servant

Mostapha Zaher

End text.

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